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SUBJECT: POLICY PLANNING DIRECTOR KRASNER DISCUSSES RUSSIA,  
ARAB WORLD REFORM, TRANSATLANTIC/MULTINATIONAL COOPERATION  
WITH FRENCH COUNTERPART

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Visiting Policy Planning Director Stephen Krasner and S/P Deputy Barry Lowenkron met in Paris April 19 with French MFA Center for Analysis and Prediction (CAP) Director Pierre Levy and his deputy, Philippe Errera for discussions of Russia's drift towards authoritarian rule; democratic reform in the Arab world; promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law; and improving transatlantic and multinational cooperation. The French offered their view of Putin's motivations, suggesting that he is following the will of Russia's domestic constituency but is still concerned with his image abroad. They expressed pessimism concerning Russia's upcoming G-8 presidency, predicting that progress on ongoing projects would be slow and acknowledged 'huge' differences in the way EU member states deal with Russia. The French also pointed out differences between Europe and the U.S. on the Middle East saying that Europeans favor respecting the sovereignty of Arab states while the U.S. favors democratic reform even if it means forcefully changing regimes. On the subject of post-conflict cooperation, the French said that many problems stem from a lack of clarity; post-conflict situations are inherently complicated but are rendered more so by miscommunication and differing understandings of commonly used terminology. They suggested developing a common understanding of terminology and criteria so that all parties involved in post-conflict reconstruction have a clear idea of the circumstances that should trigger action, the processes that should govern how action is taken, the objectives of the action and the means to realistically measure success. End summary.

2. (C) In addition to Levy and Errera on the French side at the lunch were MFA Political Director Stanislas de Laboulaye, CAP Advisor on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Space Claire Lignieres, and Center for International Studies and Research (CERI) researchers Pierre Hassner and Marie Mendras. Poloff (notetaker) accompanied Krasner and Lowenkron. Krasner opened the session by asking whether the U.S., France and other Western nations had sufficient influence to leverage positive change in Russia. Mendras responded with a question of her own: should the West really care whether Putin turns away from the democratic path internally so long as we secure his cooperation on external issues of importance to us, like Iran's nuclear program?

3. (C) Hassner suggested that Putin's domestic considerations are to some degree driving his policy choices in the near abroad. He has not come to terms with the Ukrainian revolution and we risk continued trouble-making from Russia on Georgia. The issue for us is to gauge how much we can push for adherence to democratic norms in Russia before Putin retaliates by cutting back on whatever cooperation he might otherwise be prepared to offer on external issues. Mendras stated that the West -- including the U.S. during the first Bush administration and France under Chirac -- had been too indulgent of Putin and had not spoken out forcefully enough about Russian internal developments, including Chechnya. She suggested that there are civil society leaders in Russia, especially in the provinces, who are unhappy with Putin's authoritarian turn. These can be important interlocutors for the West. There are, in fact, many elites in Russia, not just the ones centered in Moscow and St. Petersburg around Putin.

4. (C) Levy noted that the GOF had begun considering how best to take advantage of Russia's G-8 presidency next year. Laboulaye said that given Russian officials' tendency towards Soviet-style behavior, their penchant for long, intractable bargaining, and their inexperience in launching initiatives in multilateral settings, he was not optimistic that the Russians' G-8 presidency would allow us to advance any of our ongoing projects. Krasner confirmed that Washington agencies had begun thinking about this problem, but had yet to come to a concerted position on it. Agreeing with Levy, Errera said, using a chess analogy, that the Russians are skilled at "playing black," but do not have the array of opening gambits and imagination needed to "play white." Laboulaye suggested that the Russians could usefully be encouraged to work on G-8 nonproliferation initiatives during the presidency. This would represent a natural next step in the G-8 handling of Russia on this subject. We had, he recalled, talked about

Russian proliferation at the Kananaskis Summit, but since the Evian Summit we have been talking with Russia about North Korean, Iranian and other proliferation threats. Krasner agreed that this might be a fruitful area for work during the Russian presidency.

15. (C) In response to Krasner's question, Laboulaye acknowledged that there were "huge" differences among European Union members in their approaches to Russia. France, Germany, Italy and other established EU members were "open and accommodating" in dealing with Russia. Former Warsaw Pact and Soviet members on the other hand were deeply suspicious of Russia. Poland, having taken the EU lead over Ukraine as the Orange Revolution played out, has developed a more balanced voice on Russia in EU councils. The Commission, too, can be very negative in its dealings with Russia, Laboulaye said.

16. (C) A slightly different array of French players lined up for the afternoon session on Arab reform. Laboulaye and Lignieres departed, to be replaced by CAP Advisor Sophie Pommier and writer and commentator Olivier Roy. Roy led off by contrasting European and U.S. approaches to promoting reform in the Arab world. Europeans favor the respect of sovereignty of states, even if they may be ruled by repugnant regimes, and attempt to apply political and economic incentives to promote internal reform. The U.S., as demonstrated by its intervention in Iraq, is prepared to pursue a policy of regime change if this is deemed necessary to bring about reform. This approach was anathema in the Arab world and Europe before Iraq. But Iraq has changed attitudes fundamentally, Roy stated. There is now in the Middle East "a call for democracy." The idea of democracy has become popular among the people of the Middle East.

17. (C) Nevertheless, differences in the U.S. and European approaches remain, with Europeans still tending to see secular, authoritarian regimes in the region as bulwarks against fundamentalist Islam. The problem with the approach, however, is that "secular, authoritarian regimes have generally been failures," Roy went on. They do not reform politically or economically, they perform poorly in creating economic growth, and they fuel the growth of Islamic fundamentalism's appeal to the large numbers of dispossessed in society. On the other hand, American-style intervention does not necessarily produce rapid democratization either. So both approaches have their weaknesses, Roy concluded. His only constant was that democratic reform in the Arab world is a long-term process.

18. (C) Roy suggested that the West begin with a simple question: "Who are the democrats, and what power for change to they wield?" Entrepreneurs certainly have a stake in democratic and economic reform, but they are an "elusive" group in the Arab world. (There are none, for example, in Iran; in Tunisia there are some, but they are not free agents, having always to "make deals" with the regime.) This class does exist in Turkey and is one of Turkish democracy's strengths, but "it is weak in the Arab world." Intellectuals are another constituency for democracy in the Arab world, but they are dependent in many instances on support from abroad, and this very support makes them suspect in the eyes of many of their fellow Arabs. Liberal Muslims may also be a group favorable to democratic ideas, and there are many in the Arab world. It might also be possible, as in Afghanistan, to work with traditional civil society groups displaying clan and tribal allegiances. Whoever we decide are the democrats, there can be no democracy in the Arab world without political legitimacy and political legitimacy in the Arab world depends on nationalism and Islam. Democracy cannot be rooted without reference to one, the other, or both. In many instances, groups that hold this legitimacy are not now inclined to work with the West. The FIS in Algeria, Hizballah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Palestinian territories and the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt all enjoy political legitimacy with their constituencies and have to be dealt with in some way, Roy contended.

19. (C) Krasner agreed that we would have to confront this difficulty. He noted that the U.S. emphasis has been on promoting elections. First elections in many of the countries in the region may not be perfect. Some may give power to Islamist parties and groups. Our objective should be to ensure that first elections in some of these countries are not last elections. Under the right conditions, elected governments will be held accountable by the electorate, leading to democratic change and good governance. Roy pointed to the difficulty of ensuring that first elections do not become last elections, ushering in a democratically elected dictatorship that will never relinquish power. Similarly, there is a question as to whether change would result, even if relatively fair elections could be arranged a second time in some of these countries. This is because people tend to retreat into tribal and ethnic identities in periods of uncertainty, because of fears of reprisal should traditional rivals ascend to power.

10. (C) Agreeing, Pommier said that it is the lack of political maturity in much of the Arab world that makes democratic change rare. Of all Arab groups, Roy suggested, the Palestinians are perhaps the most politically mature. They have the experience of relatively free elections in 1996 -- and the experience of rule by an aging, charismatic, but despotic and ineffectual leader that they do not want to repeat. Agreeing, Levy noted that the Palestinians are among the most educated peoples in the Arab world. Taking the argument one step further, Roy said that if the Palestinians are able to build a successful, democratic state, they will demonstrate to others in the Arab world that nationalism and democracy can go together. That could be a useful example in promoting democracy elsewhere.

11. (C) With the final group of discussions, dedicated to "Promoting Democracy, the Rule of Law and Human Rights" and "Transatlantic and Multinational Cooperation," Levy introduced Jean-Maurice Ripert, the French MFA Director for the U.N. and International Organizations and, later, Eric Chevallier, the former Special Adviser to Bernard Kouchner, former Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) to Kosovo. After Krasner outlined the Secretary of State's emphasis on post-conflict reconstruction and the need to have well configured mechanisms to identify and react quickly to potential crises around the world, Ripert elaborated on the challenges of reconstruction. He said that the French have termed reconstruction a "complex situation," that is, it is not simply coming to the aid of a nation after a natural disaster where assistance can be given with little threat or ambiguity. Rather, it is an environment where there are often multiple actors, movement across borders and imperfect information that combine to create a situation where outside action can be costly and confusing. Ripert said that the U.S. and France agree that current mechanisms are insufficient to deal with these new challenges. All sides understand there needs to be international coordination yet no one nation will submit to the authority of another nation when it comes time for this coordination to take place. Furthermore, he added, while internal coordination is imperative, external coordination is just as important. One central problem of coordination, Ripert said, is that often times the coordinating bodies do not share the same vision -- they talk in shared terms while not understanding the other's definition of these terms -- this, coupled with the fact that different countries and organizations have different processes, contributes to the confusion. Ripert said that an example of this confusion is manifest in the term "Development of the Rule of Law." He said that people use this term as if the goal was universally understood, yet there is little consensus as to what developing a rule of law entails. Ripert said that 'Human Rights' and 'Democracy' are two other terms that are often mistakenly viewed as interchangeable. He asserted that the U.S. generally promotes democracy while France promotes human rights.

12. (C) Ripert said that the U.S. focus on democracy over human rights is worrisome to the French. He said that the meeting of the Community of Democracies would take place in Santiago as the U.S. and Kofi Annan would "advocate an end to the UN Commission on Human Rights." Ripert said that it is good to question the effectiveness of the Commission, but that the reform measures proposed are not the right solutions. For example, he said, creating a two-thirds rule for electing members would allow a country like Libya to get on the Commission before the U.S. He said the Commission on Human Rights, as the international human rights advocate, needs to have everyone on board, "the good guys and the bad guys." Otherwise, he said, there is a danger that no organization focused on human rights will exist within the UN. Furthermore, he warned that allowing human rights violators to exist on the periphery of an organization serves to discourage democratic activists in those countries. Ripert said that activists such as Iran's Shirin Ebadi consistently demand that France not give up on their plight, and giving up on the Human Rights Commission would send these leaders the wrong message. Krasner answered that the Human Rights Commission has not been effective and that even if the Human Rights Commission were to go away, the norms upon which human rights are based will not. So, he asked, is it better under the circumstances to have a hypocritical organization? Krasner then suggested that the French CAP consider thinking of solutions that challenge traditional norms. He asked them to question the Westphalian assumption that gives rights to states based on the fact that they are sovereign nations and consider what might happen if states were held to human rights or democratic standards in order to determine their admission into bodies such as the UN Security Council. The challenge, he said, is to identify what will motivate the state to undergo change. For example, Krasner said, pressure from Mercosur was enough to compel Paraguay to institute reform. He said that finding, creating, and/or strengthening other institutions so that they might hold this same persuasive edge may be key to changing the behavior of states.

113. (C) Pierre Levy then introduced Eric Chevallier who described several key lessons from the past decade on post-conflict situations that should inform the international community going forward. The first, he said, was that in conflict resolution there has always been a huge gap between expectations and what can actually be achieved. High expectations at the outset cause people to measure the success of action based not upon what it has achieved, but on what it was expected to achieve, therefore a disproportionate number of actions are deemed failures while very few are deemed successes. This, in turn, makes intervention a harder sell to the domestic constituency. The second lesson, Chevallier said, is that external legality is never enough. For the West, an election is the culmination of the democratic process; it follows that the West, in introducing elections to an undemocratic society, often concludes that, because elections have occurred, the society is democratic. Chevallier said that he believes elections are absolutely necessary, but that simply stenciling them onto a society is not enough. Therefore, we must examine and replicate the process that brings a society to elections- it is through this process that a society begins to feel empowered and therefore capable of choosing its own leaders and making its own decisions. The third lesson is that in conflict and post-conflict situations short-term goals often contradict long-term goals.

114. (C) Chevallier said that often times in post-conflict situations the international community holds the population to an impossible human standard. It is unreasonable, he said, to expect a man who has recently learned that his wife was killed by the other side to "forgive and forget." Furthermore, people on the ground need to have a realistic concept of what their future will be like, the promise of an ideal future in the long-term is useless when a person sees only a bleak short-term existence with no means of ever arriving at that distant goal. Objectives must be concrete, Chevallier said, they must be translated into realities that people can reasonably expect on the ground. All parties agreed that the proximity of the EU and hope of potential EU membership provided countries of the former Yugoslavia a realistic horizon that allowed them to change more rapidly than they would've had the potential for EU membership not existed. Krasner said that identifying and/or creating bodies that serve, as a motivational tool for states is imperative adding that it would be great if Africa had an effective mechanism for promoting change.

115. (C) On elections, Chevallier said that there are generally two schools of thought: the first is focused on the importance of the process and the second on the importance of the outcome. In the first school of thought, elections, even imperfect, are seen as one step in a process of refinement of the democratic process. Afghanistan and Iraq are both examples of this. However, proponents of the second school of thought, he said, argue that it is better to wait and have elections when the timing is right. He cited Bosnia as an example of this. Ripert added that this question of process vs. outcome is one that the French are currently debating as regards elections in Lebanon. When asked which model he favored, Krasner responded that in the past he would have said that if elections are held too early that the results would fall on sectarian lines, but that his answer now would be different. He said that elections that are focused on process rather than outcome can be successful but that more robust election monitoring is needed to ensure that the democratic process is adhered to and improves over time. Chevallier added that monitoring needs to be in place before, during and after elections but asked what organization would be responsible for conducting it, noting that the OSCE already does election monitoring. Krasner answered that the OSCE could possibly do it, that coalitions of the willing would not be the right type to conduct monitoring, and that the UN may not be capable either. Strengthening the AU to serve this function, he added, could be an attractive option.

116. (C) Ripert agreed that a more robust election monitoring apparatus would be useful and suggested that the U.S. and France work to define criteria. He explained that he was recently involved in UN discussions where they worked to define criteria for the use of force and that it occurred to him that it would be valuable to define criteria for other actions as well such as successful political transition. All sides agreed that this would be a good idea and that it would be beneficial to include the British in these discussions as well.

117. (U) S/P Deputy Barry Lowenkron has cleared on this cable.  
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